CBS MEMORANDUM

IRV - FYI - MARK

FROM: Mark Kramer
TO: RUSS BENSLEY
DATE: September 12, 1975

cc Bill Leonard

re JACK SAMSON

I had three conversations with Jack Samson of Field and Stream on Monday, September 8, and one the next day.

In the first, around mid-day, I told him that we were doing the "Echoes" broadcast, and that I had heard he was unhappy with "Guns." I asked him if he would consent to be interviewed by Charles Collingwood so that he could voice his objections.

I am uncertain about whether his response was a totally unqualified "yes," or whether he said he would have to go through the formality of checking with John Backe, President of CBS Publishing. In any case, his response was positive enough for me to inform Charles of the time and location of the interview (2:30 pm the next day, in Mr. Samson's office) and to order a film crew from Dick Kraut.

Our second conversation took place around 2:35 pm. Mr. Samson called to ask if we were interested in interviewing a friend of his, Nelson Bryant, of The New York Times. I told him we weren't certain at the moment, but we would keep him in mind. We did not, to my recollection, discuss Mr. Samson's interview.

Our third conversation occurred at about 3:15 pm. Sounding a bit nervous and apologetic, Mr. Samson said he had discussed our proposed interview with Mr. Backe. One apparent outcome was that Mr. Samson now wanted a written or verbal guarantee that we would not take him "out of context" in our broadcast. Additionally, he requested the right to preview the broadcast.

I asked him to clarify his request. Did he mean the entire broadcast, or just his edited interview? He replied that he guessed the interview was all he really had to see.

I told him I was fairly certain that CBS News policy did not permit any such preview, or one of the entire broadcast, for that matter. I asked him to hold for a moment.

It was then, Russ, that I checked with you. For the record, I note here that you confirmed that we could not permit a preview. Although you felt Samson was not crucial to our broadcast, you asked me to do two things: Check the policy matter further with Bob Chandler, and ask Charles to try to persuade Mr. Samson to change his mind and drop the demand for the preview.

I returned to the phone and informed Mr. Samson that I was checking still further on the preview question, but I was still pretty sure we couldn't go along with his request. We talked about the "out of context" question then. I've always been wary of that phrase (it's too vague) and took pains not to use it. I said we couldn't guarantee him that we would use any of the interview. If we did, though, we might use portions from the top, middle and bottom, and while they might not be in that order, we certainly "would not make you say anything you didn't intend." I am certain of that phrase, for I used it several times then, and later in talking to Charles.

I had the impression that Mr. Samson was satisfied with at least that part of the discussion. We said goodbye with the understanding that I would be in touch with him again on the preview issue.

I called Charles at about 3:45. I explained the two points Mr. Samson and I had discussed and repeated the phrase I had used in lieu of "out of context." Charles said he would call Mr. Samson before going to a 4 pm meeting. Charles has told me that his conversation with Mr. Samson took the following shape:

Mr. Samson expressed reservations about the possibility that we would take him out of context. Charles assured him that that was no part of our intention -- we simply wouldn't do that. Mr. Samson said he wanted the right to approve the excerpt from the interview that we planned to use. Charles responded that we couldn't do that, just as Mr. Samson couldn't grant such approval to someone interviewed by his magazine. Charles gave his personal assurance that CBS News would not distort Mr. Samson't point of view, and said that there was a "fallback" position. If it looked as though we were going to need only two minutes or so of the Samson interview, Charles would ask only one or two questions, and the responses would be used in their entirety or not at all.

Mr. Samson said he didn't think that was necessary, but he didn't rule it out. The conversation ended on a friendly note, Mr. Samson agreeing to go through with the interview, and Charles saying he would see him at 2:30 the next day.

RUSS BENSLEY

September 12, 1975

I received a call at home Tuesday, at about 10:30 am, from Mr. Samson. He was unmistakably irritated. He reiterated his demands for the guarantee not to be taken out of context and the right to preview the edited interview prior to air. I once again assured him that we would not make him say anything he didn't intend to say, but that we would not give in on the other issue. He said something to the effect that we had nothing further to discuss. I told him I regretted that because it probably would have been a good interview.

He said something very close to, "I have no reason to be kind to CBS News. I've got eight million readers. You probably cost me a lot of readers and a lot of advertisers. You didn't think of that when you did the (first) show, did you?"

We said goodbye civilly. That was our final conversation.

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